CHAPTER V
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Conclusion

Forget your troubles.
Let your heart sing.
Fly to your dreams
On silver wings.

Bobette Bryan.

The foregoing analysis of the selective novels of Mulk Raj Anand unfolds a definitive pattern of shifting Beyond Naturalism towards Hopeful Humanism but not withstanding this concern for the plight of the oppressed and the downtrodden remained strong in most of his novels. Projecting as a platform for victims of social heredity and environment, the novels have a more philosophical tone which probes the ills of society.

The basic philosophy of Literary Naturalism derives mainly from a biological model. It owes its origin to Charles Darwin and his theory of evolution which draws heavily upon his theory of natural selection. Darwin established a link that made naturalism with its emphasis upon theories of heredity and environment; a convincing way to explain the nature of reality for the late nineteenth century. But before Darwin’s ideas were available in literary form, it was Auguste Comte who brought up the idea which was later transformed by Emily Zola – the theory of heredity and environment became a basis for literature.
Zola believed that the literary imagination could make use of the ideas as long as the novelist functioned like a scientist, observing nature and social data, rejecting supernatural and trans-historical explanations of the physical world, rejecting absolute standards of morality and free will, and depicting nature and human experience as a deterministic and mechanistic process. All reality can be explained by a biological understanding of matter, subject to natural laws, available in scientific terms. Controlled by heredity and environment, man was the product of his temperament in a social context. But it has been remarked that literary naturalism occurred earlier in Europe, then in America with a different credo.

A product of the socio-economic, literary and philosophical tendencies, the naturalistic fictions in America adopted the scientific methods in varying degrees and recognized the immense influence of heredity and environment on the natural man and his destiny. Hence, literary naturalism as exemplified by the American naturalists is neither pessimistic nor optimistic. It is a vision of an entirely amoral universe is in which man's struggle for survival could be successful only by adapting to circumstances and the environment. This gives man the feeling of a harsh and inexorable destiny facing him. The individual never gains complete happiness because he is always striving for what can not be attained. Man is seen merely as a variable factor controlled by heredity and environment and perpetually adapting for survival. Man's actions have been analyzed and his place in the universe closely examined. Society, together with its flaws, has been operating on the individual as an environmental factor.
The trend of Indian literary naturalism is however, uniquely different from that of Europe and America. Tagore, Premchand, Toru Dutt and others whose works are found to be ambiguous and mystical, left a legacy to the later generation. It was Mulk Raj Anand, the novelist of the 1930s who made an improvement in a more forceful Indian version. According to him, it is not the biological forces which control the destiny of man but the social heredity and environment have a complete control over the life of an individual. Anand believes that man does not suffer from his own flaws but the social heredity of caste system and sociological environment limits the life of a person. Although Darwin’s theory of evolution does manifest in it, the conflicts of these evolutionary dialectic shapes the character of a man.

Unlike the genetically inherited features or traits, the social heredity of caste system retards the healthy growth of a person and stifles his main potentials to become a ‘man’ in the society. Thus the question of recovery of self remained obsessively in Anand’s mind. Though many philosophers began with this question, they forgot about the original impulses and began with his question rationalizing the whole world into comprehensive order in the spirit of utopianism. Therefore, Anand made a revolutionary breakaway from the inherited systems and came back to the question of self. How a poor insignificant Indian could survive and grow, mature into a human being in the conditions of servitude to dead habits, conventions, rituals and the restrictive impact of foreign rule in a country, where millions of people had no opportunity to think beyond survival and went from the womb to the grave, unaware of the poignant awareness of life, with its small joys and many miseries, destined to extinction on the small planet, one of the smallest among the millions of galaxies.
The works of Mulk Raj Anand discuss not only the impressive core of the Indo Anglian fiction but also sums up the impact of the naturalism in the life of an individual. It is natural that the Indo Anglian novel, on account of its peculiar originating impulse should have throughout a dialectical quality generalized into its wider cultural connotations in terms of tradition and change. The Indian tradition as it has been rooted in the country’s institutions, its values, its attitudes and its final life goals have always been a living tradition, inspite of certain inherent tendencies that have made for social stratification, political disorganization and intellectual stultification. The life giving quality in the Indian tradition has always been its capacity to absorb change and transform historical stimulus into cultural adjustment. Anand conforms to the Indian tradition in the sense that he achieved for his protagonist an identity commensurate with or sanctified by the cultural individuality of the Indian tradition. He exposes the disease and the decadent part of the Indian tradition and makes strident protests against the forces of naturalism within the old structure of society.

The Indo Anglian novel reveals two significant patterns in the contemporary writer’s approach to the problem of cultural change. Some writers have made a vigorous delineation of the truth of contemporary life by observing in microscopic detail the very facts of change to which the outer reality of the Indian tradition has been subjected. Mulk Raj Anand surveyed the contemporary Indian scene both with a faithful realism and with forceful naturalism. The key to reality in his works is to be found not in the submerged currents of traditional metaphysic, but in the disturbed focuses of the outer reality itself. Political dependence, economic exploitation, social
stratification and natural disaster, all these superficial phenomena that have disturbed
the Indian identity and have transformed it beyond recognition are the central themes
of his novels. Even the symbols which he projects of the transitional environment in
his novels are more directly related to the supremacy of physical, fact over life.
Untouchability, the tyranny of a plantation economy, the paramountcy of the British
and cultural conformity and social destitution which figure in Anand's novels are
essentially a manifestation of some cancerous growth within the outer structure of
the Indian tradition - the famine, plutocratic vulgarity and bourgeoisie pettiness in his
novels. The individual in the works of his novels is a helpless victim, hunted down,
trapped and completely arrested in his growth by the overpowering influence of the
outer reality. Reform, revolt and racial action became the implicit or the overt
philosophy but he does not concern himself effectively with the mechanisms of
change within the individual himself, who alone can, shape the world to his desire.

Anand did not agree with the Gandhian philosophy of compassion and love
as a tool for the amelioration of the plight of the poor and the downtrodden. At the
same time he was deeply impressed by the left-wing radicalism and had only scorn
for Gandhi's doctrine of trusteeship of the poor by the rich. With the rise of
egalitarianism in the post war Europe and the proclamation of India as a socialist
republic wedded to the Gandhian principle of peaceful social evolution, Anand's
position in society underwent a significant change.

He gives a great significance to the experience of life at various levels, in
different situations. The confrontations of reality however, bring the ultimate disaster
to the human beings. In fact, Mulk Raj Anand in his novels portrays the ‘soul drama’ of man in which it deals with the crisis of man in every human situation caused by the forces of determinism. The novels of Mulk Raj Anand are the products of the Indo-Anglian Literary Naturalism with his philosophy of break away with the past, rejection of religious orthodoxy and respect for science and sympathy for an individual in his conflict with the social surroundings. But this philosophy requires a certain study of the human mind who is allowed to live in a limited environment.

The protagonists drawn from the oppressed classes are simple, innocent, intellectually undeveloped though only faintly aware of the nature of the social forces working against them. Probing into the minds of the characters, Anand brings out what is essentially human in them, fusing the inner psychological problem with the outer reality. In *Untouchable (1935)*, he finds the stratification of society on the basis of caste, filth, poverty, disease and degradation of the sweepers of excrement in a country where the humanity is little known and excretion performed everywhere. Eighteen year old Bakha with his boyish innocence, zest for life and essential goodness which highlights his undeserved despair thereby underlines the cruelty of the society. When *The Road (1963)* opens, Bhikhu has the knowledge that the road is the only way to salvation and building should be his main concern but he does not have the slightest idea of the miseries that lies ahead in the process. Once the road is completed, the villagers could have business transactions with the other villages, towns and have better lives yet there is no gratitude and the problem arises as the chamars were engaged in the construction. Finally, after the accomplishment of Bhikhu’s endeavour, he is made to feel that he is basically a chamar, an untouchable.
He then voluntarily leaves home and walks along the newly built road towards Delhi, the capital city, with its cosmopolitan atmosphere where he will not be known as a chamar but merely as a human being.

The heroes of Anand in these two novels confront the heredity of caste system and its social hierarchy which existed from time immemorial till today but they accept the given situations without any significant protest. Though these characters are seen trying to improve their lot, they can not succeed in life due to the lack of social awareness and their inability to analyze and grasp the social organization and its dominance by upper caste people.

While social heredity is an entirely indigenous phenomenon in our country, the social environment has universal dimensions that cover a wide range of novels. *Coolie* (1936) and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) depict the lives of waifs, disinherited coolies. Munoo's enthusiasm is suppressed every time he tries to come up in life but all the same he emerges resilient. He is tossed from pillar to post till he is engulfed by death. His growing awareness and initiation into adult life are traced in the novel which runs parallel to the gradual tightening of the society's grip on him and as the class system has greater victimizing power, Munoo dies in the end. Gangu in *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) also suffers and becomes a passive victim of social exploitation. He endures all sufferings without a murmur but it is only when the atrocities of the capitalists reached the level of brutality that he raises his voice yet it does not help to solve his problem. Soon afterwards he is shot dead and Reggie Hunt is declared “not guilty”.

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Lalu in *The Village* (1939), *Across the Black waters* (1940) and *The Sword and the Sickle* (1942) is more mature and shows clear signs of class consciousness or position in the socio-economic set up. Anand in these novels gives the impression that breaking the existing social code means many traumas in the life that lies ahead but a meaningful change could be acquired in the present social structure by accepting the theory of revolutionary violence. Lalu becomes a rebel without knowing more than his own deep indignation. In trying to break the code of orthodox Hinduism, he becomes an outcaste and a part of the Count’s conspiratorial system and gets involved in a long, confused, exciting attempt to rouse the peasantry to action. He wanted to use the peasants’ ingrained sense of brotherhood as a weapon of spontaneous revolt but it is only later that Lalu realizes, that Bhakti of the peasants can truly become a political force, overthrow the existing social system, and beget a free, unified India. In *The Big Heart* (1945), Ananta also assures his people that they could win bread not separately but together with trust and holding onto each other; he could form a union and help them out of their problems. The problems of the two evils that co-exist and coalesce in society, the inhuman elements in society victimize the low-born as well as the reformers who venture to alter the social pattern. Ananta fervently advocates the use of machine as the new basis of production and make the factory system one of mutual benefit through which they can express their talent and receive just wages for their labour. The days event, moving through disquiet, hope, counsel, sectarian intrigue to destruction, gather tragic momentum and culminate in Ralia’s maniacal destruction of the factory machines and the murder of Ananta who had intervened and subdued him.
Communal and personal conflict, then, provides the raw material to literary naturalism.

In *Death of a hero (1963)*, there is a graphic description of the various atrocities that result from religious chauvinism. Maqbool Sherwani faced with a potentially tragic situation and through his self-sacrifice becomes a martyr. A born poet, he took to becoming a soldier to fight for his people yet could not accomplish his dreams as the sociological environment weighed heavily on him thus bringing on the final failure of his life. Maqbool's crusade against religious fanaticism ends in a fiasco for want of planning and organization.

Despite the tragic notes, the ideas of scientific optimism are sustaining and pervasive in his novels with perhaps the solitary exception of *The Private Life of an Indian Prince (1953)*. This last novel certainly indicates a disturbing ambivalence in relation to the rest of the singularly consistent naturalistic fiction of Anand. The protagonist Prince Victor is presented as a diseased individual owing to his own temperamental quirk and the socio-political conditions. Patel's frontal attack with the Instrument of Accession as much unnerves him as the voluptuous guiles of Gangi, his concubine. The cynical bitterness and political frustration of the Prince reduced him to a caricature when he attempts to rage against the National Government of India. In his obsession of his mistress, the Prince becomes hysterical and ultimately ends up in an asylum with the deterioration of his relation with her and the complete decline of his political power. Despite the Prince's moral and political corruption, the major emphasis of the novel lies not in the tyrannical abominations of a Marxian
ogre but in the pathetic anguish of a fallen autocrat. Compared with Bakha, Bhikhu, Munoo, Gangu, Lall and Maqbool, Victor represent victimhood at the opposite scale but the main emphasis is subjective. 'We all have been sunk in the morass of our own subjectivism' declares the narrator, that everything outside seemed to be contracting, withering and darkening.

The grievances of these victimized characters presented in his novels testify to his deep insight into the evils of society. They are often aligned or opposed in a morally meaningful way, a technique which is not to be confused with the ideological over-simplification or exaggeration which turns some characters into crudely manipulated symbols of the caste and class struggle. The achievement of Mulk Raj Anand is however, not merely methodological; nor do the protagonists of his novels always meet with death. They do have a tragic ending and fail apparently but except Bakha and Bhikhu. The others like Munoo, Gangu and Maqbool faced death in the end while Ananta and Lall land up in jail and Victor in an asylum. But their failures are only apparent and all the novels end on an optimistic note. Failures are bound to be there for the sake of literary naturalism but these failures invariably throw a ray of hope. Strife is essential to achieve the goal but the achievement is often indicated rather than illustrated because material success is not always within easy reach. The tragic destinies of the heroes of his novels do indeed suggest the remedy for the social disease, which arrests the healthy growth of the personality of the individual. Thus for example, industrialization or more precisely, mechanization is the remedy for the evils of untouchability. Scientific education and the socialist outlook can effectively put an end to the capitalistic exploitation; and a voluntary and

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free acceptance of this social reality in an organized way, can rectify the wrongs of
the society.

Traditional India has been rooted in its ideas and ideals, in its creed and
religions and in its metaphysic. Change has manifested in many forms and disguised
in the myriad impulisions of contemporary history: the impact of the west, the arrival
of machine, the city and the industry; the struggle for independence woven out of the
fabric of the Renaissance and Reformation, the enlightenment and the counter –
enlightenment, radicalism and liberalism, violence and non violence; and above all,
the climactic symbolism of the Gandhian mythology. The study of the novels of
Mulk Raj Anand has borne out the fact that the Indo Anglian writer is not only
deeply aware of these various interacting forces, but also has successfully built for
himself a system of aesthetic responses which could sensitively transfer the stuff of
life from the plane of reality to that of creative imagination.

Anand is aware that poetic justice is not always meted out in life. However,
he is not pessimistic but has firm faith in human goodness. Notwithstanding the
absence of Marxian dialectics, he has vividly depicted the varied experiences and a
lucid grasp of the current situation. The human virtues like love, understanding, co-
operation, compassion and spirit of brotherhood depicted in his novels are regarded
as essential qualities in maintaining a healthy, congenial and harmonious social life
in the thick of moral decadence and growing disappearance of the age-old values. He
attacks the ossified systems of traditional life with the hostility of an iconoclast and
at the same time present modernity as an alternative to traditional way of life.
Though a Marxist, he always looks forward to the democratic ideals enshrined in Indian Renaissance, as a liberal democrat, he always turns towards Marxism to seek fulfillment for his humanistic aspirations. Thus the sociological drama presented in his novels embodies, inevitably, the search for a new frame of values, which is characterized by its underlying spiritual, psychological and mythopoeic motifs.

Anand cannot in fact, be charged with pessimism or fatalism; as the ultimate aim of his protagonists is always social upliftment and human betterment. Although mechanistic determination is instrumental in bringing about the eventual catastrophe of the protagonist, the triumph of Anand seems to be in his transcendental comprehension of the social dynamics that determines the destiny of every individual. His imposition of the patterns of his own thought on the fictional papier mache of experience is in complete consonance with the philosophy of naturalism. As such, his novels are living milestones in the tradition of Indo-Anglian literary naturalism.

Despite the tragic notes of the novels, the ideas of scientific humanism are sustaining and pervasive in his novels. In fact, it is his consciousness of the need to raise the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the coolies and other suppressed members of society, to human dignity and self awareness in view of the abjectness, apathy and despair into which they are sunk, which has made him a naturalistic humanist.
Anand’s humanism places man in the center of all things and believes in the ethical equality of all men. He feels that all men are equal and there should be no division of caste, creed, or race, which act as obstacles for human development and dignity. According to him, the conquest of pain should be the supreme goal of all individuals and all nations. He strongly condemns the cruelty and the pain inflicted upon the underprivileged by the higher sections of society and firmly believes that one of the most urgent needs of mankind today is to infuse love and tenderness into the hearts of all men.

Anand shows his contempt for all kinds of exploitation and corruption in the modern society, which had made human mind immune to the nobler values of life and believes that the wisdom of the heart encourages insights in all kinds of human beings and thus, man’s latent goodness which ultimately triumphs over evil. He believes in the Bhakti-Yoga, the integration of an individual with the society. It is a search for a center, a principle of unity which has found in the virtue of charity. Anand held that there was a sense of oneness in the country throughout the best periods of our known history. Keeping in mind this Bhakti, he introduced some idealistic characters who practice the qualities of the ‘Big heart’. With their influence on the people they proved that the best are the men who lived upto their creeds. Iqbal Nath Sarshar and Mohan presents Bhakti at different angle while De La Havre is the embodiment of goodness who even with the limited equipment provided to him, tries his best to improve the conditions of the coolies. Lall of The Village (1939) realizes how the Bhakti of the peasants can truly become liberation. Ananta perceives best and reflects the true complexity of the situation while Dr. Shankar steadily improves
growing more conscious that the people are to be pitied more than the Prince, determining at last to begin a life of Bhakti. Anand acquired a positive faith in, what he calls himself socialist humanism. He believes in an ideological strategy to avoid violence with an emphasis on the moral cleansing of human heart rather than on the inevitability of violent social change.

But even today, the solid bedrock of the national culture is being upheld in a fanatical manner in one form or the other. Man’s life is determined by the social norms as we have miserably failed to develop a scientific outlook, which is the need of the hour. It is well nigh impossible for us to effectively shape the destiny of the oppressed, to improve the quality of life and to provide the basic necessities of life unless we are steeped in science. For science awakens the urge to inquire and re-search for the truth. This kind of attitude would probably help bring about a social change from hide bound traditional ties that has kept us in its vicious grip. Many of the social values that were upheld in the ancient times are outworn and irrelevant in the changing times, and are to be discarded once and for all. Therefore, what we need is not the militant revival of a moribund culture but the creation of dynamic contemporary society as envisaged by Mulk Raj Anand.

Mulk Raj Anand’s novels can thus be read as a forerunner to the contemporary Dalit debates. The victims, the modern day counterparts of Bakha and Bhikhu, have come a long way in their struggle for cultural identity against decisive political and social forces. However, the hideous face of untouchability will perhaps remain as a painful lesson from our unredeemed past. This peculiar social condition
of Dalit's life is prevalent till today and they still have to struggle for their survival. They are still facing the injustices that were meted out to them thousand years ago but the Dalits themselves were no longer prepared to be silent bearers of the atrocities and occupants of the liminal space to which they have been confined for centuries. Leaders like Phule and Ambedkar used the full force of their erudition to take apart the procedures Brahmanism had used to maintain the casteist social order but now there are many Dalit activists and leaders working for Dalit concerns. Dalits are waging their own struggle and they no longer depend on the progressive people to work on their issues because now they have their own independent organizations. The discussions of the literary and cultural representations of the marginalized and dispossessed people such as untouchable and aboriginal communities has been based on the writings of upper caste writers, such as Mulk Raj Anand, Mahasweta Devi and Premchand are in the context of a discourse of sympathy and compassion yet they failed to fill a gap. Dalits were still not speaking subjects; they were not people with self pride and always represented as objects of pity rather than as authors of their own. Critics are of the view that these writers do not show Dalits as they are, but as helpless and child-like people who can not make their own decision or take action. For example, Bakha in *Untouchable (1935)*, instead of opting for radical solution, submits to Gandhi’s pacifism and is thus contained. Sardesai suggests, Dalits charted their own cause of action. Though consigned to the margins of society, and to the same tasks that kept the upper caste society pure and pollution free, they became a visible presence and their voices began to break through the boundaries that had kept them apart. They have created their own distinct identity. The non-Dalit
critic, the non-Dalit publisher and the non-Dalit reader have played a major role in creating this identity enabling Dalit literature to emerge.

With the rise of Dalit literature, Dalit’s sorrows, the struggles for their rights could be witnessed and thus encountered the real human being, the new being. Because today one individual is not destroyed, but the whole community is murdered and when there is a fire in the heart of one individual, the heart of all community is aflame. Such is the battle between the upper caste and the untouchable. The fight that is rooted in history, the fight that is going on now, is a fight to become one – to build a new society.